St. Louis County Department of Public Works Division of Code Enforcement

When is a Building Permit required for Commercial Projects? (Commercial includes Multifamily Residential)

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION WORK

A Building Permit is required to construct, enlarge, alter, reconstruct, repair, move, demolish & replace a building or structure; to convert unfinished space to occupiable rooms; and/or to change the occupancy or use of a building or portion of a building. Structures include, but are not limited to, retaining walls, fences, sheds, garages, carports, greenhouses, above-ground tanks, towers, antennas, flag poles, solar arrays, wind turbines, signs, swimming pools, etc. A building permit is also required to construct, enlarge, alter, reconstruct, overlay, or reconfigure a parking lot.

Relative to repair work building permits must be obtained for any repairs that: a.) involve the cutting away of any wall, partition or portion thereof, the removal or cutting of any structural beam or load-bearing support, or the removal or change of any required means of egress, or rearrangement of parts of a structure affecting the egress requirements, b.) are required as a result of fire, wind, flood or earthquake damage regardless of the extent of damage, and/or c.) are required because of lack of on-going regular maintenance or neglect and involve multiple/elements/components of the building needing to be repaired or replaced in multiple rooms/spaces on the inside of the building and/or to the building exterior to put the building back into good and sound condition.

Except for repairs as noted above the following types of work is considered ordinary repairs or minor work for which a building permit will not be required, provided such ordinary repairs are regularly performed as on-going continued maintenance for the purpose of maintaining the building or structure in good condition:

- 1. Tuckpointing existing masonry, patching plaster or drywall, painting, floor sanding and refinishing, installing floor tile, installing carpeting (all areas except interior corridors & exit stairs), replacement of flooring with like material, application of wall paper (and other similar wall covering material) over drywall/plaster, and similar cosmetic finish work. Movable cases & counters, most countertop & cabinet installations (except restaurants, bars, mall kiosks, etc);
- 2. Installing or replacing battery operated smoke detectors in multifamily residential.
- 3. Repair or replacement of existing gutters and above grade portions of downspouts;
- 4. Application of pre-finished aluminum or steel (or other like materials) on existing soffits, fascia boards, overhangs, and other similar exterior architectural features;
- 5. Repair or replacement of existing windows and frames (whenever no modification is made to the rough opening) and/or interior glazing & frames replacements with like materials provided the replacement glass shall meets the safety glazing requirements for

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- new installations.
- Repair or replacement of exterior and/or interior doors and/or frames, provided the fire rating, when applicable, is maintained (whenever no modification is made to the rough opening);
- 7. Installing or replacing ceiling tile of any type, other than foam plastic, when applied to existing ceiling surfaces except when within assembly rooms > 300 occupants, institutional room/spaces, and corridors or exit stairways of any use. Replacement of damaged lay-in ceiling panels of like materials up to 25% of a room/space and a maximum of 500 square feet;
- 8. On existing interior stairs, landings, and/or elevated floors: Repairing or replacing handrails, tread, and/or riser finish boards, and/or up to 50% of the components (balusters or rails) that comprise the guard with like materials. (Note: a building permit is required to repair or replace more than 50% of the guard components (balusters or rails), to replace the guard along an existing interior stair, stair run, or elevated floor, and/or to replace an entire interior stair or stair run).
- 9. Installing or replacing exterior siding (vinyl, metal, etc.);
- 10. Roof covering replacement for roof slopes of 4:12 or more when done with a like material.
- 11. Foundation and floor slab repair such as patching/filling of cracks (up to 1/4 inch in walls and 3/8 inch in slabs), waterproofing basements, etc provided the building is otherwise structurally sound and plumb;
- 12. Installing or replacing exterior ramps, stairs and/or steps, which are on grade (and not more than 12 inches above the existing grade), not attached to the structure, and within property lines.
- 13. Installing or replacing concrete patio slabs or wooden patios/decks (for other than outdoor restaurant seating) which rest directly on the ground or a rock base, provided they are not covered by a roof or canopy, are not supported by any type of permanent foundation, and are a maximum of 12 inches above the finished grade;
- 14. Installing or replacing sidewalks and replacing driveways within property lines;
- 15. Resealing and/or restriping an existing paved parking lot, provided that the restriping matches the existing configuration and the number of spaces remain the same; (A permit is required to replace or overlay existing paving and re-stripe, or to re-stripe an existing parking lot with a new parking space layout and drive configuration)
- 16. Small retaining walls up to 3 feet in height that do not support a surcharge load and are not located closer to the property line than their vertical height. Walls and associated grading shall not create a change in property elevation along property lines, block drainage or create erosion or damage to adjacent properties (see document titled "When is a Land Disturbance Permit required for Commercial Projects);
- 17. New fencing or replacement of existing fencing not more than 6 feet in height, except when enclosing public swimming pools. Note: Barbed wire and electrically charged fences of this exempted height are prohibited.
- 18. Normal residential backyard type playground equipment (including basketball goals & standards) for multifamily complexes, day care centers, etc provided the play area is shown on the approved site development plan.
- 19. Flag poles, radio or television antennas, weather vanes with small decorative ornaments,

and similar structures 12 feet or less in height, installed on the ground, attached to or on the roof of a building. Dish antennas 2 feet in diameter or less installed on grade, attached to or on the roof of a building. Even though a permit is not required these types of structures must still maintain the front yard setback required by the County Zoning Ordinance. (Note: A building permit is required to install a wind turbine or similar energy generating device of any height).

- 20. Small statues on private property, placed on grade without need for a foundation, not attached to or part of a building or structure provided such statues maintain the front yard setback required by the County Zoning Ordinance;
- 21. Relining, repairing, patching and/or shotcreting existing public swimming pool walls/floors, provided required minimum water depths under diving boards (if present) are maintained.
- 22. Small detached accessory buildings/structures used for utility/tool or storage sheds, and similar uses which are 120 square feet or less in area and less than 10 feet in height provided the structure maintains the front yard setback requirements of the County Zoning Code. Note: This does not include small accessory buildings or built-in structures having unique uses such as outdoor fireplaces, outdoor kitchens & BBQ's and/or smoke houses, storage of fuel or other hazardous materials above normal household quantities, the presence of fuel fired appliances or equipment, and other similar uses that if not properly located and/or installed may present an increased fire hazard. A building permit is required for all buildings/structures housing these types of uses regardless of size. A building permit is also required for the installation of ground or roof mount solar panel arrays of any height/area.
- 23. On existing exterior decks, porches, and/or stairs: Repairing or replacing up to 50% of the existing finish decking material with like material; repairing or replacing up to 50% of the components (balusters, rails or support posts) that comprise the guard, and/or replacing up to 50% of the entire linear length of the guard with like materials; and/or repairing or replacing stair handrails, tread, and/or riser finish boards with like materials. (Note: a building permit is required to replace a deck or porch; to replace deck/porch joists, beams, headers, ledger boards, and/or columns; to replace the finish decking, guard, and/or stair treads with a different material such as replacing wood with plastic or composite products; to repair or replace more than 50% of the finish decking with like material; to repair or replace more than 50% of the components (balusters, rails, or support posts) that comprise the guard or to replace more than 50% of the entire linear length of the guard with like materials*; and/or to replace an entire exterior stair or stair run)

* When replacing more than 50% of the length of the guard, or when replacing a substantial percentage of the components that comprise the guard, the entire guard shall be made to comply with current code requirements which may require a different guardrail design and/or materials.

For additional information on building permit & inspection requirements visit our website at www.stlouisco.com/YourGovernment/CountyDepartments/PublicWorks.

Listing of work exempt from building permit was originally consolidated from individual policies and released 06/01/98; Updated 12/01/02 & 06/01/06; Document reformatted as "When is a Building Permit Required" and Issued 3/22/10, Updated 07/26/11, 09/20/13, 10/01/13, 01/02/14, 02/07/14

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